they liked the peanut butter cookies I baked after midnight. They were soft. Adam liked them too, not because his teeth were bad. He had a sweet tooth. By midnight I'd have to throw out all the left-overs. Otherwise Babs would complain to the manager about the way I'd left the kitchen. She'd even photograph it, with the Polaroid we used to photograph the tenants, and show the pictures to our director at Head Office. Tut, tut. The manager always phoned Babs after midnight. They were a couple. Babs called her "dear." That was what she called everyone. Gladys called her "dear" behind her back.

I twisted the bleach rag over the bucket on top of the fridge and started to wipe Frederick (not Fred)'s table. It didn't need it. I'd already wiped it once when I cleaned up right after supper. It was just a way to break the ice, and get him to lift up his head. The bleach stank. It smelled like burnt skin. I burned myself with it once, cleaning the back stairs with my bare hands.

It worked. He slowly raised his head. I asked him what was wrong. He said it was Laura. She loved Louis. She was throwing him aside for Louis, a figment of his imagination. Swift was wrong, if one's own delusions could betray one thus.

When I suggested that it didn't matter, Louis was a bum, Laura could have him if that was what she wanted, Frederick